



FILE PHOTO: TARA STIEGLITZ

MOVIN' ON UP Golden Bears captain defenceman Harlan Anderson (R) gets ready to pass the puck earlier in the season. He's wearing a new jersey now, having signed with the Springfield Falcons of the AHL on an amateur try-out contract.

Canada West MVP Anderson signed to Oilers' AHL farm team

Captain of championship team playing with Springfield Falcons as a try-out

ROBIN COLLUM
Sports Editor

It seems that the sky's the limit for Harlan Anderson's hockey success lately. Hot on the heels of the Alberta defender's trip to the national championship, where the Bears won and he was named both an all-Canadian and tournament all-star, Anderson has joined the Springfield Falcons, AHL affiliate of the Edmonton Oilers, on an amateur try-out contract.

Anderson, who played his fifth year with the Bears this season, travelled to Massachusetts almost immediately after Alberta claimed the University Cup, and is now playing for the Falcons.

"It's great. It was exciting to win the national championship again; it was fun to be able to do that with the guys on the team this year," Anderson said of his recent run of success. "As far as the tryout goes, I'm taking it as a good opportunity to show off my skills and hopefully earn myself a job somewhere next year."

Instead of going through a traditional tryout process, Anderson joined the Falcons' roster right away. Not only has he practiced with the team, he's played two games for them already; they'll evaluate him in action and then choose whether or not to sign him to a proper contract.

"They call it a tryout, but basically, it's just a way for guys to come down and play for the team," Anderson said. "So far, I've played two games for Springfield, and I've been practicing with them, so it's been great. The level of play is pretty high, and it's been a lot of fun."

"[With] a lot of universities and colleges in the States and Canada, once their season's done, their players can

go to different teams if they want and if they're picked up," Falcons head coach Kelly Buchberger explained. "That's exactly what happened to Harlan after [Alberta] had won."

"There's no question that he played well for the U of A, and he's got a great hockey sense, and he's got a lot of leadership."

KELLY BUCHBERGER
SPRINGFIELD FALCONS HEAD COACH

According to Buchberger, the Falcons are already benefiting from the addition of Anderson to the team.

"There's no question that he played well for the U of A, and he's got a great hockey sense, and he's got a lot of leadership. That's the one thing we were lacking a little bit, and he's added it, for sure," he said. "He's a right-handed shot, and he plays well on the power play, and that's one thing we were lacking—offensive defencemen—and he's really come in and added what we were missing."

"We're fighting to make the playoffs right now—we're five points out right now with seven games left. We believe that we can make the playoffs, and Harlan's going to give us that extra boost hopefully that we need."

Anderson, who was Canada West MVP this year, was the league's highest-scoring defenseman—he had 44 points in 36 games this season, counting exhibition and playoffs.

"When you get a defenceman who's got a point a game or a goal a game

and is your Canada West MVP and the captain of the championship team, he's going to get some recognition," Bears head coach Eric Thurston said. "He's got the size, he has the ability to see the ice very well, and he also has the ability to quarterback the power play. I'm sure the Oilers know that those guys aren't easy to find."

So far, Anderson feels that he's adjusting well to the different team and league in Springfield.

"In these first two games, I've played quite a bit—I've played more than I thought I was going to in the first two games—and I felt pretty good out there," he said. "I'm definitely learning things as I go. Obviously they don't do everything the same way that our team does, so I've sort of had to learn how to play with the different systems as I've gone. The coaching here's good, and they've been trying to help me out and help me adjust to the level."

Fortunately, he's getting along well with his new teammates as well.

"There's a lot of good guys," Anderson said. "They're all Oilers draft picks and guys that have signed with the Oilers, so a lot of them are guys who've played against us in that Oilers Rookie game. They're really friendly guys, and just like anybody else, they want to win. They're all here for the same reason."

The Falcons are still far from deciding whether they'll keep Anderson on the roster past the end of this season, but he's optimistic.

"As far as earning a contract for next year goes, I think my chances are pretty good. I think I've shown that I can play at this level in those first two games, and hopefully, I can improve along the way in the next seven games."

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